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**Acceptable Worship**

**9-Day Devotional**

The purpose of this devotional is to walk you through a few Old Testament and New Testament worship practices, which I pray will help you see the importance God places on worship throughout the entire Bible.

**Day 1: Abrahamic worship practices**

Israel’s God was different than all other gods. Israel had ONE God who was personal, who intervened in history, and who declared no objects in worship practices.

YAHWEH was...  
...the Living God – Genesis 12:7

...the Sovereign God – Genesis 17:16

...the Righteous Judge – Genesis 20:3, 7

...the Gracious God – Genesis 16:11-13

...the Faithful God – Genesis 17:9-10a

*To ponder:* In your devotional worship, do you worship the God of the Bible, or have you created a god of your own making? Review His attributes again and meditate on each one.

**Day 2: Abrahamic worship practices, part 2**

Abrahamic worship was based on a sacrificial system. God initiated worship with His people, which contrasted with pagan worship. Pagan practices worked to gain favor and acceptance from their gods. Israel’s God invited them into relationship.

Other Scriptures on Abrahamic worship:

Genesis 4:2-5

Genesis 8:20

Genesis 9:11-12

Genesis 26:24-25

Genesis 28:16-17

*To ponder*: What would worship look like if it was centered on the Lord’s regard and pleasure rather than on one’s own gifts, tastes, or preferred style?

**Day 3: Mosaic Worship and the Tabernacle**

With the establishment of God’s covenant with Moses and his people, God instituted a pattern of worship for the Israelites. Today and tomorrow, we will explore the elements of worship in the Tabernacle to better understand their significance.

Read Exodus 24 - 26.

*To ponder:* How does understanding the preparation that went into meeting in the Tabernacle help you better approach worship today?

**Day 4: Mosaic Worship and the Tabernacle, part 2**

The order of worship revealed in the Tabernacle:

* Courtyard of the Tabernacle – Exodus 27:9-19  
  God calls His people to Himself
* Laver – Exodus 30:17-21  
  The priests cleanse themselves
* High Altar – Exodus 27:1-8  
  Sacrificial atonement is made to worship God
* Lampstand – Exodus 25: 31-40; Exodus 27:20-21  
  God reveals himself to the priest
* Table – Exodus 25:23-30  
  Contains bread, signifying God’s communion with His people
* Altar of Incense – Exodus 30:1-10; Exodus 30:34-38  
  The priest makes intercession for the people
* Ark of the Covenant – Exodus 25:10-22  
  God’s Presence

As evidenced in Exodus, God placed a high importance on every component of worship. The priests were not to deviate from what God instituted, and the Israelites were not allowed to worship any way they saw fit.

*To ponder*: How much of modern worship planning focuses on personal desires? What can you do to help your congregation understand that worship focuses on God’s desires and not our own?

**Day 5: Davidic Worship and the Temple**

Between the time of the Tabernacle and the Temple occurred the time of the judges. As Israel settled in Canaan, they were influenced by pagan worship practices from the tribes already settled there. This created syncretism in their worship practices, where they combined pagan rituals with worship of Yahweh. God used judges, and ultimately Samuel, to help redirect worship back to what God desired. Enter: King David.

1 Chronicles 17: David codifies and organizes worship in the temple. He moved the Ark of the Covenant back to Jerusalem and desired to build a temple for the Lord.

1 Chronicles 22: David’s preparation for the Temple

1 Chronicles 28: David provides detailed instructions for the building of the Temple

Psalm 30: David’s dedication of the Temple

*To ponder*: How does the preparation for building the temple compare with the building of the tabernacle? Do you see worship as a holy and sacred time each week?

**Day 6: Davidic Worship and the Temple, part 2**

Read 2 Chronicles 3 and 4.

Parts of the temple:

* Outer courtyard – 2 Chronicles 4:1-6
* Bronze altar – offering sacrifices
* Bronze sea – priests cleanse themselves
* Bronze basins – washing of the burnt sacrifices
* The Holy Place – 2 Chronicles 4:7-8
* Lamp stand – God’s revelation – where God speaks
* Table of Showbread – God’s communion with His people
* Altar of Incense - ascent of prayers of the people
* The Most Holy Place – 2 Chronicles 3:10-14
* Veil with Cherubim
* Ark of the covenant
* Holy of Holies - high priest only allowed on Day of Atonement

*To ponder*: Worship leaders do not have to “lead us into God’s presence.” They do not initiate worship. God invites us into worship, every time. In light of this, does it matter if worship is done well?

**Day 7: Synagogue**  
Between the close of the Old Testament canon and the beginning of the New Testament, worship shifted from the temple to the synagogue. The word Synagogue means “gathering place” or “place of assembly” (Luke 7:5). With the final destruction of the temple in 70 A.D., the synagogue became the center for Jewish life. Synagogues appeared in every major city at the time.

Read the passages below and reflect upon how worship shifted from the temple to the synagogue.

The temple in the New Testament:

* Luke 1:11 – Zechariah had a vision​
* Luke 2:25 – Jesus presented at temple​
* Luke 2:46 – Jesus talking to temple rabbis​
* Mark 11:15 – Jesus overthrew money tables​
* John 5 – Jesus was observed at various feasts in the temple​
* Matthew 21:12-16 – Jesus spent last week of life at the temple

Christians and the temple:

* Luke 24:50-53
* Acts 2:42-47
* Acts 4:1
* Acts 21:26

*To ponder*: How did temple worship differ from synagogue worship? What was Jesus’s view of the temple?

**Day 8: Synagogue, part 2**

What new distinctives were added to New Testament worship practices?

* Christians used writings of their own leaders (Paul and the Gospels)
* New hymns were added from Christian writers
  + Read through Philippians 2:5-11 slowly. This is a hymn that Christians sang when they gathered together!
* Baptism and Communion were added
  + Romans 6:1-4
  + 1 Corinthians 11:23-34
* Recitation of Creed
  + 1 Corinthians 15:3-5
* Christians worshiped on the first day of the week, the day after the Jewish sabbath. Why? Because Jesus arose from the dead on Sunday, which is the day on which we still worship!

*To ponder*: Should we continue to set aside Sunday and keep it holy?

**Day 9: Congregational Song**

“It is well known that the character of its song, almost equal with the character of its preaching, controls the theology of a church . . . It is essential that he be worshipped in accordance with his own infallible Word, and that that worship seek to reflect the whole counsel of his will.”

– *Trinity Hymnal*, 1961

Every time I read that quote, I stop and think about how that is true in every church I have ever attended. What we sing matters. Let’s see where congregational singing occurred in Scripture, and then we can apply it today.

Old Testament Congregational Singing

* Psalms were central in the Temple
  + Psalms 120-123: Songs of Ascent – these were sung by Jewish people as they trekked toward Jerusalem for the festivals
  + Psalm 136: Responsorial/Antiphonal
* Levitical Priests
  + In addition to other duties, they led all music activities in the temple
  + 2 Chronicles 5

New Testament Congregational Singing

* Colossians 3:15-17 – when they gathered, they sang psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs
* Ephesians 5:15-20

Worship in the Eschaton

* Revelation 4 – every week when we gather, God invites us into the worship that is continually occurring around his throne!

*To ponder*: Congregational song is for the believer. Every mention of gathering as a body in Scripture refers to believers. Therefore, our worship practices need to focus on the believer, not the unbeliever.

If this devotional has whet your appetite to study more on the topic of worship, I suggest the following books to continue your education:

Aniol, Scott. *Worship in Song: A Biblical Philosophy of Music and Worship*. Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 2009.

Cruse, Jonathan Landry. *What Happens When We Worship*. Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2020.

Ross, Allen P. *Recalling the Hope of Glory: Biblical Worship from the Garden to the New Creation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2006.

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